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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003056

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STATE FOR NEA/I, NEA/POL, INL/I
JUSTICE FOR ICITAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/10/2017

TAGS: POL PREL IZ

SUBJECT: CONTROVERSY CENTERS ON CPI COMMISSIONER

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Patricia A. Butenis for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

1.(C) Summary: Iraq's head of the Commission on Public Integrity (CPI) Radhi al-Radhi, left with a group of CPI investigators for training in the U.S. in mid-August amid a cloud of controversy over allegations of corruption and official misconduct. Radhi, who has been embroiled in a struggle for control of the CPI, apparently left with the knowledge and consent of the GOI. Since then, he has submitted an application for retirement (reportedly under duress) and intends to seek asylum in the U.S. Efforts to uncover what is going on at Iraq's central anti-corruption office have been difficult and GOI officials have declined to explain the situation to us. End Summary.

NO STRANGER TO CONTROVERSY

2.(C) Former Commission on Public Integrity (CPI) Radhi al-Radhi left Iraq on August 22 with a group of investigators from the Commission on Public Integrity who were scheduled for training in the U.S. Radhi claimed that he wanted to travel to the U.S. with this group for purposes of consultations with U.S. officials, and to undergo medical treatment unavailable in Iraq. Since then, there have been allegations of corruption against Radhi, and claims that he fled Iraq in order to avoid prosecution. Radhi has countered those allegations with his own against current and former GOI officials.

3.(C) In a conversation subsequent to Radhi's arrival in the U.S., we were told by Iraq's top investigative judge that although Radhi had been interviewed about a series of allegations against him and 15 other CPI employees, he was neither asked to return for further interviews or questioning nor limited in any way from traveling abroad. The judge further told us that the allegations against the CPI officials centered mostly on administrative violations such as cronyism, hiring Ba'athists, and selective prosecution of cases. While Radhi was free to travel, the judge concluded, if charges are eventually filed against him and he does not return to Iraq, he will be tried in absentia.

WHO'S RUNNING CPI?

4.(C) The struggle for control of the CPI appears to continue within the GOI. A series of announcements and declarations have centered mostly on Mousa Faraj, a former deputy commissioner at the CPI. Under Radhi's tenure as commissioner, Faraj was removed amid charges of corruption and selecting cases for prosecution based on sectarianism.

At the behest of GOI officials within the Prime Minister's office, Faraj was re-installed as a deputy commissioner and fired again for similar reasons. Faraj is currently out on bail, awaiting a trial based upon those charges.

5.(C) EmbOffs met with senior GOI officials at the PM's office to seek clarification on the current leadership of the CPI. GOI officials said that when the head of an institution is away, or otherwise unable to perform his duties, the deputy is the interim replacement. However, they did not clarify who the deputy is, and left the question of who is running the CPI unanswered.

6.(C) While there are no significant new programs or exchanges planned for the CPI, projects that are already approved and funded include specialized training for the investigators, training and transfer of personal weapons, and training and transfer of surveillance equipment. Additionally, the FY 07 Supplemental budget includes USD five million in funding to continue the ICITAP/MPRI training and mentoring program, and another five million dollars for equipment -- including 500 protective vests and 25 armored vehicles for CPI employee. These projects will continue, subject to GOI agreement and cooperation.

COMMENT

7.(C) While the circumstances surrounding Radhi's decision to retire and seek asylum remain unclear to us, it is apparent that we would be ill-advised to become involved in legal and personnel matters at the CPI. While we had a constructive working relationship with Radhi at the helm of the CPI, it is impossible to characterize how our relationships with an interim, or a new, commissioner might

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develop. Our interest in the CPI should remain one of helping the GOI's top anti-corruption agency continue to develop as an institution and to provide training and assistance to the investigators and functionaries of that institution. Post intends to continue engaging with our working-level contacts at the CPI, offering training and assistance to them.

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